

**High Praise – Deep Worship**  
**Pastor Joe Oakley**  
**GFC – 4/25/21**

We're beginning a new sermon series today called High Praise/Deep Worship. It's based on a prophetic word we gave on March 21 when then Lord said He wants to take us into a deeper dimension of worship. A deeper dimension of experiencing the manifest presence of God. A higher dimension of praise and a deeper dimension of intimacy with God.

God said that experiencing this deeper dimension of praise and worship requires 4 things:

- Consecration – to be set apart to God, totally devoted to God
- Concentration – to be focused on God and to not offer Him watered-down worship
- Consideration – Considering what God wants in worship and considering each other as we worship in unity.
- Courage – when we press in the enemy fights it, but high praise overcomes the enemy every time!

This series is not just about praise and worship that happens at church. It's about a lifestyle of praise lived in the presence of God. When's the last time you really experienced the manifest presence of God at home? When you looked at each other in awe and said, "God is here right now."

Oh, I know God is everywhere. I'm talking about the manifest presence of God where we are totally aware that God showed up.

Listen – you need God to show up in your home, marriage and family. You need God to show up at work. You need God to show up in the good times and the hard times. So you need to go higher in praise and deeper in worship!

Here are our main verses for this series. Our verse for higher praise is Psalm 149:6

*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth.*

Our verse for deeper worship is Psalm 42:7

*Deep is calling to deep...*

Wherever you are in your relationship with God – He wants to take you deeper. Deeper in the word, prayer, praise, worship, understanding, faith.

Now understand – this a continuous progression in our lives. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says:

*But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

From glory to glory mean ever-increasing glory. The Greek word for glory here is doxa which means glory that is very apparent. That's another way to say the manifest presence of God.

Since God is invisible, glory refers to His self-manifestation. Glory means radiance, splendor, brightness, magnificence, excellence. A manifestation of power characterized by glory.

We find a pattern for this progression to higher praise and deeper worship in Psalm 100.

*Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

This Psalm shows us where our thanksgiving to God begins. It doesn't say, "Give thanks for your food and clothes, your home and those you love." There's a place for that, but true worship begins with who God is, not with what He gives.

The focus of this psalm is worshipping God. It shows us the progression of getting to the place of worshipping God. Usually we reduce that progression to verse 3.

*Enter His courts with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.*

There is great truth here: thanksgiving and praise precede entering the presence of God. But that verse is sandwiched between 2 verses whose subject is knowing God.

Verse 2: *Know that the Lord is God.*

Verse 5: *For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.*

We will not worship without praising. We will not praise without thanksgiving. And we will not be thankful until we understand who God is!

The Lord is God; we are not. God made us; we did not make Him. God is always good, unceasingly loving and forever faithful. If we don't see God like that, we will never be thankful. Instead, we will be ungrateful, angry, frustrated and unhappy. We will not praise and we definitely will not worship.

We must take the time and effort to get to know God.

When we do, we will become grateful. Grateful for grace and mercy. Grateful for forgiveness and salvation. Grateful for all His blessings.

If you hear anything I say today, hear this: ungrateful people do not worship. True worship starts with thanksgiving. It is only when we approach God with thanksgiving and praise that He manifests, or reveals Himself to us.

Thanksgiving is the entryway. Thanksgiving gets us in the door. Then, praise gets us into His presence. And worship is our response to His presence.

Having a thankful heart and expressing that thanks to God gets us into a realm of His presence that we otherwise would not enter. When we are in that manifest presence, wonderful things happen – changes occur in us. When we touch heaven – changes happen on earth! But that change must start in us. We must overcome ungratefulness by choosing to be grateful.

It's easy to be ungrateful. It takes no effort to focus on bad things or unfulfilled dreams. It takes effort to focus on being thankful for the things God has done. So, we must make an effort to be thankful people.

Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!

By the way – I can give you many biblical examples of this progression to higher praise and deeper worship. For example – in the Tabernacle of Moses – there was an outer court, an inner court called the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

The outer court had an altar for blood sacrifices and a laver to wash in. These speak of salvation through the blood of Christ and water baptism. This was the place of forgiveness – so it was a place of thanksgiving.

The Holy Place had a golden lampstand, the table of showbread and an altar of incense. These speak of the light of the Word, prayer, and communion with the Lord.

There was a veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies – there was only one thing in the Holy of Holies – the ark of the covenant. And that was where God manifested His presence.

You see the ark did not represent God's presence – it literally was the place where God revealed Himself on earth. Numbers 7:89 says:

*When Moses entered the Tent of Meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony. And He spoke with him.*

The Holy Place was where God met with the High priest.

In Old Testament times – the presence of God was behind the veil and only one man – the High Priest could go in there once a year.

God was showing how sin separates us from Him. In fact notice all the pictures of the Tabernacle of Moses are looking down on it – because if you were level with it – you would only see a wall of curtains. You could not even see into the outer court.

However – the good news is that when Christ died – the veil was rent. The way into the Holy of Holies was now open. Now we can all approach God and spend time in His presence.

And the way we do that is by praising our way in! We must give up performance orientation to experience God's presence. We can't earn His presence. We can't do enough good to be worthy on our own. Thank God, Jesus made the way. In fact, He IS the way! Hebrews 10:19-22 says:

*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*

Every New Testament believer can do something that only the High Priest could do under the Old Covenant! We can all come boldly to the throne of grace because Jesus opened the way through His blood.

Another example of this progression to higher praise and deeper worship is found in the story of the Wise Men who visited Jesus as a baby. In Matthew 2:2 they said,

*“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.”*

Notice that their purpose was to worship the Lord. And that is our purpose in life – the seek the Lord, have faith in the Lord, and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

I want you to notice a progression in this story. The wise men were seeking Jesus so that they could worship Him. Matthew 2:10 says:

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.*

This rejoicing was not small or hidden – it was big and observable. They didn't just rejoice. They didn't just rejoice with joy. They rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. The Greek word here for great is mega. It means high, large, loud and mighty! Wise people rejoice in the Lord with mega praise – high praise – loud and mighty praise!

What is high praise? In our culture, high praise is to think of someone very highly, and to speak highly of them. For example: "I give my Father high praise for the hard work he did to raise me."

Some commentators say it is exalting - or lifting up the Lord most high. Other Bible commentaries define high praise as:  
to lift up and to be lifted up  
to be exalted and to show exaltation,  
to cause to grow.

So – high praise causes God to be magnified in our eyes!  
We lift Him up and exalt His holy name.  
That’s why knowing God is so important.  
The more you know Him, the more you will praise Him.

So, when the wise men got close to Jesus, they rejoiced with great joy.  
But Matthew 2:11 says:

*And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.*

When they got close – they rejoiced. But they don’t stop there – they move on into God’s presence. When the wise men finally found the Christ, the Bible says they fell down and worshipped him. You see there’s a time for singing – shouting – dancing. But there’s a time when the only appropriate response is to fall at His feet and worship Him.

We enter His gates with thanksgiving. We enter His courts with praise.  
But when we enter His presence, we worship.

The Greek word here for worship is proskuneo (pros-koo-neh'-o); meaning to prostrate yourself in reverence, to adore, to kiss. Our word worship comes from the old English word worthship. In olden days, when people came into the presence of a king, they bowed, they kissed their hand or their ring and they called them “your worthship.” So when we get into the presence of our King, we do the same. Psalm 95:6 says:

*O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.*

When the wise men fell down and worshipped, they gave Jesus gifts.  
You see - the essence of worship is giving.

- Thanksgiving is giving thanks for what God has done.
- Praise is giving glory to God for who He is.
- Worship is totally giving yourself to God - which is your reasonable service of worship.

Romans 12:1 says:

*I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.*

You might think: I hear you, Pastor Joe, but is this really a big deal for my daily life? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!

I want you to understand that praise releases supernatural power that alters every realm – physical, spiritual and even societal.

Our praise and God's presence always go together. Simply put – when our praises go up, God's glory comes down! And when Jesus shows up – supernatural things happen! Breakthrough happens!

But what I want you to understand today is that praise precedes breakthrough and praise results in breakthrough! Praise starts in your heart – but it doesn't stay there! Jesus said in John 4:23-24

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.*

True worship starts in your heart but it is expressed in truth – in an appropriately Biblical manner. In the Bible, praise is almost always something that can be seen and heard because physical actions are a direct representation of the condition of the heart. Jesus said in Luke 6:45

*For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

In other words – what's in your heart will flow out of your mouth! If there is no praise coming out of your mouth – what does that say about what is in your heart?

Many people never experience breakthroughs in life because they never break through whatever is holding them back from praising God. They don't sing or clap or shout and they wonder why they're stuck. They don't praise and they wonder why they don't experience the presence of God.

Listen - the first key to experiencing breakthroughs in life is you breaking through in praise! Psalm 89:15 says:

*Blessed are the people who know the joyful shout. They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your presence.*

Again – we see that praise results in God's presence. Praise transports us into the realm of the supernatural power of God.

And when God hears the sound of praise it attracts His attention.  
 In other words, God says, “When you praise, I’ll show up.”  
 That’s true in church and it’s true in everyday life.

We all have areas where we need the presence and power of God to invade our lives.

We have sicknesses, weaknesses, sins, addictions, strongholds – all of these are areas where we need to proclaim the victory of Jesus Christ.

We need His triumph in our marriages – families – work – finances – health.

We need His victory every minute of every day of our lives.

The question is: How do we attract God to our situation? What is God looking for?  
 Psalm 22:3 tells us!

*But You are holy, You Who inhabits the praises of Israel.*

God dwells in praise. So whenever you need God in a situation, you need to begin to praise Him right then and there. He’s looking for praise. It gets His attention.

So, instead of focusing all the time on that tough situation, on that mountain, on the devil - START TO PRAISE GOD!

Not low praise or little praise - But high praise!

The main Hebrew word for praise is Halal – the root word of Hallelujah.  
 Halal means to celebrate with exuberant, loud boasting in the LORD!

We all need God to show up in our lives and our families today.  
 Well... God is looking for praisers who will boast in Him.

So, we must choose to praise no matter what!  
 No person is going to take my place of praise!  
 No circumstance is going to take away my praise!  
 No devil in hell is going to steal my praise!  
 And my own pride will not keep me from praising!

In all things I will give thanks.

I choose to rejoice in the Lord no matter what because He is always worthy of praise!

Praise silences the enemy and invites God into our situation.

Praise releases the power of God to work on our behalf.

Praise releases the burdens and bondages that hinder our breakthrough!

Can you offer God some high praise this morning?

Can you give Him glory for who He is? King of Kings! Lord of Lords!

Alpha and Omega! Beginning and End! Savior! Healer! Provider! Deliverer!